

§ 106-465. Organization and membership of tobacco boards of trade; rules and regulations; fire insurance and extended coverage required; price fixing prohibited.

Tobacco warehousemen and the purchasers of leaf tobacco, at auction, on warehouse floors, are hereby authorized to organize, either as nonstock corporations, or voluntary associations, tobacco boards of trade in the several towns and cities in North Carolina in which leaf tobacco is sold on warehouse floors, at auction.

Such tobacco boards of trade as may now exist, or which may hereafter be organized, are authorized to make reasonable rules and regulations for the economical and efficient handling of the sale of leaf tobacco at auction on the warehouse floors in the several towns and cities in North Carolina in which an auction market is situated.

Each tobacco board of trade organized pursuant to this section shall, on or before June 1, 1973, by regulation, require that all auction warehouse firms which are members of, or may hereafter request membership in, such board of trade for the purpose of displaying for sale and selling leaf tobacco, deposit with the board of trade prior to the market opening, a copy of a policy of fire insurance and extended coverage in a company licensed to do business in North Carolina to fully insure, as determined by the board of trade, the market value of the maximum volume of tobacco that will be weighed and left displayed for sale on said warehouse floor at any time during the marketing season. Warehouses using mechanized conveyor-line auction sales where tobacco is not displayed for sale on sales floor would be excluded from the requirement of this regulation.

In determining the market value and maximum volume of tobacco that will be weighed and placed on said warehouse floor at any one time, the board of trade shall use as criteria the prior season's official gross average price for that belt, as recorded by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the maximum limit of daily sales, as recommended by the currently functioning flue-cured and burley tobacco marketing organizations, applied to each warehouse based on the firm's pro rata share of the market's maximum limit daily sales opportunity, multiplied times the number of days of sales that said warehouse plans to place on sales floor at any one time, including any and all tobacco weighed and deposited with the warehouse as bailee for future sale. The data relating to the official average price and the maximum limits of daily sales shall be assembled and supplied by the North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture or his representative to the board of trade in each tobacco market in North Carolina, at least 30 days prior to the opening of markets in each belt.

It shall be unlawful for any person, firm, or corporation to operate an auction sale in said market until said policy is so deposited with and approved by the board of trade. The board of trade shall enjoin the sale of tobacco by any warehouse firm that fails to so deposit a policy of fire insurance and extended coverage with the board.

The tobacco boards of trade in the several towns and cities in North Carolina are authorized to require as a condition to membership therein the applicants to pay a reasonable membership fee and the following schedule of maximum fees shall be deemed reasonable, to wit:

A membership fee of fifty dollars (\$50.00) in those towns in which less than 3,000,000 pounds of tobacco was sold at auction between the dates of August 20, 1931, and May 1, 1932; a fee of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) in those towns in which during said period of time more than 3,000,000 and less than 10,000,000 pounds of tobacco was sold; a fee of one hundred fifty dollars (\$150.00) in those towns in which during said period of time more than 10,000,000 and less than 25,000,000 pounds of tobacco was sold; a fee of three hundred dollars (\$300.00) in those towns in which during said period of time more than 25,000,000 pounds of tobacco was sold.

Membership, in good standing, in a local board of trade shall be deemed a reasonable requirement by such board of trade as a condition to participating in the business of operating a tobacco warehouse or the purchase of tobacco at auction therein.

Membership in the several boards of trade may be divided into two categories:

- (1) Warehousemen;
- (2) Purchasers of leaf tobacco other than warehousemen.

Purchasers of leaf tobacco may be: (i) participating or (ii) nonparticipating. The holder of a membership as a purchaser of leaf tobacco shall have the option of becoming, upon written notice to the board of trade, either a participating or a nonparticipating member. Individuals, partnerships, and/or corporations who are members of tobacco boards of trade, established under this section or coming within the provisions of this section, as nonparticipating members shall not participate in or have any voice or vote in the management, conduct, activities, allotment of sales time, and/or hours, the fixing of dates for the opening or closing of tobacco auction markets, or in any other manner or respect. Individuals, partnerships, and/or corporations who are such nonparticipating members in any of the several tobacco boards of trade shall not be responsible or liable for any of the acts, omissions or commissions of the several tobacco boards of trade.

It shall be unlawful and punishable as of a Class 1 misdemeanor for any bidder or purchaser of tobacco upon warehouse floors to refuse to take and pay for any basket or baskets so bid off from the seller when the seller has or has not accepted the price offered by the purchaser or bidder of other baskets. Any person suspended or expelled from a tobacco board of trade under the provisions of this section may appeal from such suspension to the superior court of the county in which said board of trade is located.

Nothing in this section shall authorize the organization of any association having for its purpose the control of prices or the making of rules and regulations in restraint of trade. (1933, c. 268; 1951, c. 383; 1973, c. 96; 1993, c. 539, s. 790; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1997-261, s. 109.)